

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This paper is submitted in response to the final office action mailed on March 16, 2006. At that time, claims 1-6 and 8-26 were pending. In the office action, the Examiner allowed claims 1-6 and 8-15. The Examiner objected to claims 19-26 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim (e.g., claim 16), but indicated that such claims "would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims." At the same time, the Examiner, rejected claims 16-18 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,336,651 issued to Mramor et al.

By the present paper, Applicant has canceled the rejected claims 16-18. Moreover, Applicant has, as instructed, rewritten allowable claims 19-26 such that these claims no longer depend from rejected base claim 16. More particularly, claim 19 has been rewritten in independent form. Likewise, claims 20-26 all depend, either directly or indirectly, from claim 19. Accordingly, these claims no longer depend from a rejected base claim and are in a condition for immediate allowance.

The present amendment means that all of the pending claims (e.g., claims 1-6, 8-15, and 19-26) are either allowable or in a condition for immediate allowance. For this reason, the present amendment should be entered.¹ Thus, Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case. If there are any remaining issues preventing allowance of the pending claims that may be clarified by telephone, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned.

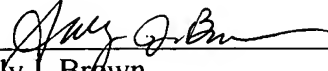
¹ Section 714.12 of the MPEP teaches as follows:

Once a final rejection that is not premature has been entered in an application, applicant or patent owner no longer has any right to unrestricted further prosecution. This does not mean that no further amendment or argument will be considered. Any amendment that will place the application either in condition for allowance or in better form for appeal may be entered.

Accordingly, the fact that the present amendment places the present application in a condition for allowance means that this amendment should be entered by the Examiner. If the Examiner does not enter this amendment, Applicant requests that the Examiner notify Applicant of such action via telephone so that Applicant may take the appropriate steps to further prosecution of this case.

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Response dated June 8, 2006
Reply to Office Action of March 16, 2006

Respectfully submitted,



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